

What is claimed is:

1. A support system for a dock leveler having a ramp and a lip comprising:  
a support leg apparatus attached to the ramp, said support leg apparatus comprising a support leg;  
a camming surface biased to a first position and movable to a second position when the ramp descends at least as fast as a predetermined rate and said support leg apparatus engages said camming surface, wherein said camming surface is configured to remain in the first position when the ramp descends slower than a predetermined rate; and,  
a lip holder configured to cause said camming surface to move to the second position when the ramp descends at any rate and when the lip engages said lip holder.
2. The support system of claim 1, wherein the support leg apparatus further comprises a cam aligned to engage said camming surface.
3. The support system of claim 2, wherein said cam is a roller cam.
4. The support system of claim 1, further comprising a support structure configured to support the ramp when said support structure engages said support leg.
5. The support system of claim 1, wherein said support leg is biased to a supporting position and further wherein said support leg is configured to move to a retracted position when said support leg apparatus engages said camming surface, the

ramp descends slower than the predetermined rate, and the lip does not engage said lip holder.

6. The support system of claim 5, further comprising a leg guide.
7. The support system of claim 1, wherein the support leg apparatus is configured to support the ramp at one of a dock level position and at least one below dock level position.
8. A support system for a dock leveler having a ramp, comprising:
  - a support leg attached to the ramp;
  - a camming surface; and,
  - a first cam aligned to engage said camming surface and movably attached to said support leg such that said first cam is configured to move substantially linearly from a first position to a second position when the ramp descends at least as fast as a predetermined rate and said first cam engages said camming surface, wherein said first cam is biased to said first position and is configured to maintain said first position when the ramp descends slower than the predetermined rate.
9. The support system of claim 8, wherein said support leg is biased to a supporting position and moves to a retracted position when said first cam engages said camming surface at slower than the predetermined rate.
10. The support system of claim 9, wherein said first cam is a roller cam.

11. The support system of claim 9, further comprising a spring wrapped around a spring rod and biasing said first cam to the first position, wherein said spring communicates with said first cam at one end and with a bracket at a second end, wherein said bracket is attached to said support leg and said support leg includes a slot for said first cam to move between the first position and the second position.

12. The support system of claim 9, further comprising a second cam attached to said first cam by an axle.

13. The support system of claim 9, further comprising a block defining in part the camming surface and at least one engaging area.

14. The support system of claim 8, further comprising a leg guide.

15. The support system of claim 8, wherein said camming surface comprises first and second substantially horizontal portions for engaging said support leg when said first cam is in the second position.

16. The support system of claim 8, wherein the support leg is configured to support the ramp at one of a dock level position and at least one below dock level position.

17. A support system for a dock leveler having a ramp and a lip comprising:  
means for supporting the ramp attached to the ramp, said supporting means comprising a support leg;  
means for camming biased to a first raised position and movable to a second position when the ramp descends at least as fast as a predetermined rate and said supporting means engages said camming means, wherein said camming means is configured to remain in the first position when the ramp descends slower than a predetermined rate; and,  
means for holding the lip configured to cause said camming means to move to the second position when the ramp descends at any rate and when the lip engages said lip holding means.
18. The support system of claim 17, wherein the supporting means further comprises an engaging means aligned to engage said camming means.
19. The support system of claim 18, wherein said engaging means is a roller cam.
20. The support system of claim 17, further comprising means for supporting the support leg configured to support the ramp when said support leg supporting means engages said support leg.
21. The support system of claim 17, wherein said support leg is biased to a supporting position and further wherein said support leg is configured to move to a retracted position when said support leg apparatus engages said camming means, the

ramp descends slower than the predetermined rate, and the lip does not engage said lip holding means.

22. The support system of claim 21, further comprising means for guiding the support leg.

23. The support system of claim 17, wherein the supporting means is configured to support the ramp at one of a dock level position and at least one below dock level position.

24. A support system for a dock leveler having a ramp, comprising:  
means for supporting the ramp attached to the ramp;  
means for camming; and,  
engaging means aligned to engage said camming means and movably attached to said supporting means such that said engaging means is configured to move substantially linearly from a first position to a second position when the ramp descends at least as fast as a predetermined rate and said engaging means engages said camming means, wherein said engaging means is biased to said first position and is configured to maintain said first position when the ramp descends slower than the predetermined rate.

25. The support system of claim 24, wherein said supporting means is biased to a supporting position and moves to a retracted position when said engaging means engages said camming means at slower than the predetermined rate.

26. The support system of claim 25, wherein said engaging means is a roller cam.
27. The support system of claim 25, further comprising means for biasing said engaging means to the first position, and said support leg includes a slot for said engaging means to move between the first position and the second position.
28. The support system of claim 25, further comprising a second engaging means attached to said engaging means by an axle.
29. The support system of claim 25, further comprising a block defining in part the camming means and means for engaging the support leg.
30. The support system of claim 24, further comprising means for guiding the support leg.
31. The support system of claim 24, wherein said camming means comprises first and second substantially horizontal portions for engaging said support leg when said engaging means is in the second position.
32. The support system of claim 24, wherein the supporting means is configured to support the ramp at one of a dock level position and at least one below dock level position.

33. A method of operating a dock leveler ramp comprising the steps of:  
providing a dock leveler with a support leg biased to a supporting position;  
configuring the support leg to retract when the dock leveler ramp descends slower than a predetermined speed by moving a cam along a camming surface; and  
configuring the cam to not move substantially further along the camming surface when the dock leveler ramp descends faster than a predetermined speed by moving an axle supporting the cam along a slot.
34. The method of claim 33, further including biasing the axle to one end of the slot.
35. The method of claim 33, further comprising configuring the support leg to support the ramp at one or more positions.
36. The method of claim 35, wherein the one or more positions are chosen from a dock level position and at least one below dock position.
37. The method of claim 36, wherein the one or more positions is a below dock position.
38. A method of disengaging a support leg retraction apparatus of a dock leveler comprising the step of configuring the dock leveler to move a camming surface with a lip portion of the dock leveler when the lip is in the pendant position and the dock leveler is being lowered.

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39. The method of claim 31, further comprising biasing the support leg to a supporting position.